

## Representing *Dakwah Bil Hal* in Indonesian Popular Literature: A Semiotic Analysis of Ali's Character in the Novel *Matahari*

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### ***Abstract***

The rapid development of the digital era has transformed people's patterns of information consumption and contributed to the declining reading interest among younger generations. In this context, popular novels emerge as an alternative medium that functions not only as entertainment but also as a channel for conveying moral and religious values. This study aims to analyze the representation of da'wah in Tere Liye's novel *Matahari* through the character Ali, using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach. The research examines how Ali's actions, dialogue, and symbolic representations reflect the values of dakwah bil hal in Indonesian popular literature. This study employed a qualitative approach based on Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis, which comprises three levels of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth. Primary data were obtained from the novel *Matahari*, while secondary data were collected from various scholarly works related to semiotics, da'wah communication, and literary studies. Data collection techniques included documentation, close reading, and the classification of dialogues, narratives, actions, and symbols associated with the representation of da'wah in Ali's character. The findings reveal that Ali represents da'wah values through social actions, respect for sacrifice, tolerance, solidarity, responsibility, and concern for others. At the connotative and mythological levels, Ali is constructed as an ideal representation of a young Muslim generation that is intelligent, humanistic, and adaptive to social change. This study demonstrates that popular novels can function as an effective medium of da'wah communication in promoting religious and humanitarian values within contemporary digital society.

**Keywords:** Representation of Da'wah, Roland Barthes Semiotics, Popular Literature, *Matahari*, Tere Liye, *Dakwah Bil Hal*

### **Abstrak**

Perkembangan era digital telah mengubah pola konsumsi informasi masyarakat dan berdampak pada menurunnya minat baca generasi muda. Dalam konteks tersebut, novel populer menjadi salah satu media alternatif yang tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai hiburan, tetapi juga sebagai sarana penyampaian nilai moral dan nilai-nilai keagamaan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis representasi dakwah dalam novel *Matahari* karya Tere Liye melalui karakter Ali dengan menggunakan pendekatan semiotika Roland Barthes. Penelitian ini berfokus pada bagaimana tindakan, dialog, dan simbol yang melekat pada karakter Ali merepresentasikan nilai-nilai dakwah *bil hal* dalam konteks sastra populer Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode analisis semiotika Roland Barthes yang mencakup tiga tingkatan makna, yaitu

denotasi, konotasi, dan mitos. Data primer diperoleh dari novel *Matabari*, sedangkan data sekunder berasal dari berbagai literatur terkait semiotika, komunikasi dakwah, dan kajian sastra. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui studi dokumentasi, pembacaan intensif (*close reading*), serta klasifikasi dialog, narasi, tindakan, dan simbol yang berkaitan dengan representasi dakwah pada karakter Ali. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa karakter Ali merepresentasikan nilai-nilai dakwah melalui tindakan sosial, penghargaan terhadap pengorbanan, sikap toleransi, solidaritas, tanggung jawab, serta kepedulian terhadap orang lain. Pada tingkat konotatif dan mitologis, karakter Ali dikonstruksikan sebagai representasi ideal generasi muda Muslim yang cerdas, humanis, dan adaptif terhadap perkembangan zaman. Penelitian ini membuktikan bahwa novel populer dapat berfungsi sebagai media komunikasi dakwah yang efektif dalam membangun nilai religius dan kemanusiaan di tengah masyarakat digital kontemporer.

**Keywords:** Keywords are a maximum of five words, such as: (Character, Multicultural, Scientific Learning,

## INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought about a major transformation in communication patterns, information consumption, and people's literacy culture. The internet and digital media allow people to obtain information instantly, but they also pose serious challenges to reading culture, especially among the younger generation. This phenomenon is characterized by a decline in interest in reading due to the dominance of visual media and entertainment-based digital content that is shorter and faster to consume<sup>1</sup>. This condition is an important concern because a low literacy culture can affect the quality of critical thinking, moral reflection, and the ability to understand social and religious values more deeply. The low literacy level of the Indonesian people is reflected in the results of the World's Most Literate Nations (WMLN) research, which ranks Indonesia 60th out of 61 countries, just above Botswana. The data show that the literacy level of the Indonesian people remains in the low category compared with other countries. This condition indicates significant challenges in building a reading culture amid the rapidly accelerating pace of digital development.<sup>2</sup> In this context, literary works, especially popular fiction, can serve as an alternative medium for increasing reading interest while conveying moral and religious values to the public.<sup>3</sup> Novels function not only as an entertainment medium but also as a space for social, cultural, and religious representation that

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<sup>1</sup> Sony Eko Adisaputro and Sutamaji Sutamaji, 'DAKWAH STRATEGY IN SOCIAL MEDIA', *Al-Tsiqob : Journal of Islamic Economics and Da'wah* 6, no. 1 (2021): 1, <https://doi.org/10.31538/altsiq.v6i1.1262>.

<sup>2</sup> Fauziyah et al., 'Da'wah and Innovation for Economic Empowerment of Traditional Market Traders in The Digital Era', *Communicator: Journal of Communication* 2, no. 1 (2025): 1, <https://doi.org/10.59373/comm.v2i1.95>.

<sup>3</sup> Maudhy Satyadharma et al., 'Collaborative Governance Communication in Community-Based Traffic Safety Programs in Kendari City', *Communicator: Journal of Communication* 3, no. 1 (2026): 29–43, <https://doi.org/10.59373/comm.v3i1.309>.

can shape the reader's perspective on life's reality. Through characters, conflicts, dialogue, and storylines, novels can convey moral messages implicitly or explicitly, making them more easily accepted by readers of all ages and social backgrounds.<sup>4</sup> Studies on literature and da'wah show that literary works uniquely convey Islamic values in a persuasive, humanistic manner. Da'wah in literature does not always take the form of normative lectures but can be realized through the actions, symbols, social relations, and behavior of the story's characters.<sup>5</sup> This approach is known as da'wah bil hal, the delivery of Islamic values through concrete actions and social examples. In the context of an increasingly pluralistic and digital modern society, da'wah through popular media such as novels is relevant because it can reach readers emotionally and prompt reflection.<sup>6</sup>

Table 1. Reading Interest

| Country        | Ranking | Country         | Ranking | Country      | Ranking |
|----------------|---------|-----------------|---------|--------------|---------|
| Finland        | 1       | Malta           | 21      | Romania      | 41      |
| Norway         | 2       | South Korea     | 22      | Portugal     | 42      |
| Iceland        | 3       | Czech Republic  | 23      | Brazil       | 43      |
| Dermark        | 4       | Ireland         | 24      | Croatia      | 44      |
| Sweden         | 5       | Italy           | 25      | Qatar        | 45      |
| Switzerland    | 6       | Austria         | 26      | Costa Rica   | 46      |
| United States  | 7       | Russia          | 27      | Argentina    | 47      |
| Germany        | 8       | Slovenia        | 28      | Mauritius    | 48      |
| Latvia         | 9       | Hungary         | 29      | Serbia       | 49      |
| Netherlands    | 10      | Slovak Republic | 30      | Turkey       | 50      |
| Canada         | 11      | Lithuania       | 31      | Georgia      | 51      |
| France         | 12      | Japan           | 32      | Tunisia      | 52      |
| Luxembourg     | 13      | Cyprus          | 33      | Malaysia     | 53      |
| Estonia        | 14      | Bulgaria        | 34      | Albania      | 54      |
| New Zealand    | 15      | Spain           | 35      | Panama       | 55      |
| Australia      | 16      | Singapore       | 36      | South Africa | 56      |
| United Kingdom | 17      | Chile           | 37      | Colombia     | 57      |
| Belgium        | 18      | Mexico          | 38      | Morocco      | 58      |
| Israel         | 19      | China           | 39      | Thailand     | 59      |

<sup>4</sup> "The Dilemma of the Digital Era: Is the Younger Generation's Interest in Reading and Writing Eroded? - Google Search," accessed February 8, 2025, [https://www.google.com/search?q=dilema+era+digital+%3A+minat+baca+dan+menulis+generasi+muda+tergerus%3F&coq=dilema+era+digital+%3A+minat+baca+dan+menulis+generasi+muda+tergerus%3F&gs\\_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUyBggAEEUYOTIGCAEQRRg8MgYIAhBFGDzSAQkyMTkxajBqMTWoAgiwAgE&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.com/search?q=dilema+era+digital+%3A+minat+baca+dan+menulis+generasi+muda+tergerus%3F&coq=dilema+era+digital+%3A+minat+baca+dan+menulis+generasi+muda+tergerus%3F&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUyBggAEEUYOTIGCAEQRRg8MgYIAhBFGDzSAQkyMTkxajBqMTWoAgiwAgE&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8).

<sup>5</sup> M. Chothibul Umam Assa'ady et al., 'A Reading Interest Management Strategy in the Digitalization Era Through the Askara Aksara Street Library', *Al Madani* 3, no. 1 (2024): 38–45, <https://doi.org/10.37216/al-madani.v3i1.1462>.

<sup>6</sup> A. Teeuw, *Literature and Literary Science: Introduction to Literary Theory*, Cet. 1, Seri Pustaka Sarjana (Pustaka Jaya, 1984), <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1130282268926671744>.

|        |    |        |    |           |    |
|--------|----|--------|----|-----------|----|
| Poland | 20 | Greece | 40 | Indonesia | 60 |
|        |    |        |    | Botswana  | 61 |

Source: Digital Era Dilemma: Reading and Writing Interest of the Young Generation Eroded?

One popular novel worth studying in this context is *Matabari* by Tere Liye. The novel, which was first published in 2016, is part of the *Bumi series*, which received a positive response from readers in Indonesia. The high level of reader appreciation is evident in the novel's Goodreads rating, which ranges from 4.3 to 4.43 stars. In addition to offering an engaging fantasy-adventure narrative, this novel presents various representations of moral values, humanity, tolerance, sacrifice, and collective spirit that align with Islamic da'wah values.<sup>7</sup>

Ali's character in *the novel Matabari* is an important figure to analyze because it represents intelligence, creativity, social empathy, and respect for others. This representation is evident in Ali's various actions, which reflect the value of *da'wah bil hal*. One example is when Ali created a silver capsule called ILY as a tribute to the sacrifices of other characters. These actions not only serve as narrative elements but also embody the values of respect, solidarity, and humanity that are central to the novel's da'wah message. Research on the representation of da'wah values in literary works has actually been carried out a lot.<sup>8</sup> Some previous studies have mostly discussed moral values, religiosity, or character education in Islamic novels.<sup>9</sup> Other studies have also examined semiotics in popular literature, but tend to focus on symbols and moral messages in general.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, research on the novel *Matabari* by Tere Liye remains dominated by studies of character education, moral values, and the story's fantasy elements. Studies that specifically analyze the representation of da'wah *bil hal* through Ali's character using a semiotic approach are still very limited.<sup>11</sup>

The limitations of previous research indicate a research gap in the study of literature and da'wah communication, particularly regarding how characters in popular novels convey da'wah

<sup>7</sup> Imam Safi'i et al., 'Internalization of the Value of Tawheed in the Communicative Interaction of Digital Da'wah Gus Baha', *Communicator: Journal of Communication* 2, no. 2 (2025): 184–95, <https://doi.org/10.59373/comm.v2i2.295>.

<sup>8</sup> Nuzhat Fatima and Fauziyah, 'The Message Of Da'wah In Films And Criticism Of The Concept Of Reincarnation', *Communicator: Journal of Communication* 1, no. 2 (2024): 2, <https://doi.org/10.59373/comm.v1i2.68>.

<sup>9</sup> 'The Benefits of Reading Novels in Increasing Children's Literacy Awareness - Modernis.Co', accessed 9 February 2025, <https://modernis.co/opini/20290/manfaat-membaca-novel-dalam-meningkatkan-kesadaran-literasi-anak/>.

<sup>10</sup> Bintan Inayah Rahmadiyah, 'Representation of the Privilege of Embracing Islam in the Main Character in the Novel and Film Merindu Cahaya de Amstel by Arumi E', *IJESPG (International Journal of Engineering, Economic, Social Politics and Government)* 2, no. 2 (2024): 2, <https://doi.org/10.26638/ijespg.118>.

<sup>11</sup> Hoiyawati Talukdar et al., 'Digital Populism: An Analysis of Donald Trump's Rhetoric in X', *Communicator: Journal of Communication* 3, no. 1 (2026): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.59373/comm.v3i1.286>.

messages through symbolic actions and social interactions. Most previous research has not situated the figure's character at the center of da'wah representation within a semiotic framework. In fact, semiotic analysis allows researchers to uncover denotative, connotative, and ideological meanings embedded in the actions and symbols the author constructs through the story's characters. Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the representation of da'wah in the novel *Matahari* by Tere Liye through the character Ali, using a semiotic approach.<sup>12</sup> This research seeks to explain how the actions, dialogues, and social relations of the character Ali represent the values of *da'wah bil hal* in the context of popular literature.<sup>13</sup> In addition, this study aims to demonstrate that popular novels not only serve as entertainment but also as an effective da'wah medium for fostering moral values, tolerance, and humanity in a contemporary digital society.<sup>14</sup> Academically, this research is expected to contribute to the development of the study of da'wah communication, literary semiotics, and Islamic popular media studies, especially in understanding how religious messages are represented through characters and narratives in popular Indonesian novels.

## METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach, employing Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis, to examine the representation of da'wah values in Ali's character in the novel *Matahari* by Tere Liye. The qualitative approach was chosen because this research seeks to understand, in depth, the meaning, symbols, and construction of the da'wah message as represented through narratives, dialogues, actions, and relationships between characters. This approach allows researchers to interpret socio-cultural phenomena contained in literary texts in an interpretive and contextual manner.<sup>15</sup> Roland Barthes' semiotic model is used because it reveals the meanings of signs at the levels of denotation, connotation, and myth hidden within literary texts. For Barthes, semiotics serves not only to read signs in verbal form but also to understand how

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<sup>12</sup> Azhari Akmal Tarigan, 'Fardhu'Ain Dan Fardhu Kifayah Ala Mahathir Mohammad', *Alert*, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Developing the Ability of Pilgrims, *DAKWAHBIL-HAL*, n.d.

<sup>14</sup> Ibn Kasir and Syahrul Awali, 'The Role of Digital Da'wah in Spreading Islamic Messages in the Modern Era', *An-Nasyr Journal: The Journal of Da'wah in the Eye of Ink* 11, no. 1 (2024): 59–68, <https://doi.org/10.54621/jn.v11i1.842>.

<sup>15</sup> Abdul Wahab and Nurul 'Ainin Nafi'ah, 'ANALYSIS OF DA'WAH METHODS IN THE FILM AYAT-AYAT CINTA 2', *An-Nida : Journal of Islamic Communication* 12, no. 1 (2020): 67–73, <https://doi.org/10.34001/an.v12i1.1212>.

signs work to shape ideologies, cultural values, and social constructs in society.<sup>16</sup> In Barthes' perspective, signs consist of *signifiers* and *signifieds*. Markers refer to physical forms such as words, actions, symbols, or dialogues in a text, while markers are the concepts or meanings that result from those forms.

Through this framework, the research not only stops at the literal (denotative) meaning but also examines the connotative and mythological meanings that represent the values of da'wah in the novel. Denotation is understood as a direct meaning that appears in the text, while connotation deals with implicit meanings that are influenced by social and cultural experiences. Myth is understood as a system of ideological meaning that has been naturalized in society.<sup>4</sup> The use of Barthes' theory is considered relevant because this research focuses on the representation of da'wah *bil things* that arise through the symbolic actions of Ali's character in *the novel Matabari*. The research data consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained from the novel *Matabari* by Tere Liye, published by Republika Publisher in 2016. Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained from journal articles, academic books, prior research, and related literature on Roland Barthes' semiotics, da'wah communication, representation, and the study of Islamic popular literature. The use of secondary data aims to strengthen interpretation and provide a theoretical context for the research analysis results.<sup>17</sup>

The data collection technique is carried out through a documentation study with several stages. First, the researcher conducted an intensive (close) reading of the novel to understand the narrative structure and Ali's characterization as a whole. Second, the researcher identifies and classifies parts of the text as dialogues, narratives, character actions, and symbols representing da'wah values. Third, the classified data is recorded and categorized based on the indicators of the representation of da'wah *bill*. Data analysis was carried out in stages using Roland Barthes' semiotic model. In the first stage, the researcher analyzes the denotative meanings of the signs appearing in the text. The second stage involves identifying connotative meanings related to moral values, religiosity, tolerance, sacrifice, and social relations among characters. The third stage is directed toward identifying the mythological meaning or ideology constructed through Ali's character as a representation of da'wah in popular novels. To maintain the validity of the data, this study employs theoretical triangulation by comparing relevant

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<sup>16</sup> Muhammad Khalis Irfan et al., 'REPRESENTATION OF ISLAMIC DA'WAH METHOD (SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS IN BUYA HAMKA FILM)', *Nubunwah : Journal of Communication and Islamic Broadcasting* 1, no. 02 (2023): 60–78, <https://doi.org/10.21093/nubunwah.v1i02.6732>.

<sup>17</sup> Burhan Bungin, *Qualitative Research: Communication, Economics, Public Policy, and Other Social Sciences*, vol. 2 (Kencana, 2007), <https://scholar.google.com/scholar?cluster=14586470090727974226&hl=en&oi=scholar>.

references on semiotics, representation, and da'wah communication. In addition, data interpretation is carried out in context, considering the relationships among texts, popular culture, and social-religious values that develop in society. Thus, the research results are expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the representation of da'wah in the novel *Matahari* by Tere Liye.<sup>18</sup>

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the many scenes in the novel *Matahari* by Tere Liye, the researcher selected the scene and tried to observe the location of the scene in accordance with the discussion to be studied, so that the analysis of the existing data was in line with the purpose of the research, namely the representation of da'wah *bil hal* in Ali's character. Therefore, to optimize the research, there are 13 scenes in the novel *Matahari* by Tere Liye that will be researched, including:

### 1. Representation of empathy and self-control

The scene below tells that Ali's character, who outwardly seems not to care, actually feels sad.

Table 2. Scene page 19

|              |                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Scene Quotes | "While Ali sat leaning against the wall, staring at the floor. Since then, Ali has not said much. Despite being indifferent to many things, Ali must have felt the same sadness." |
| Markers      | Ali sat leaning against the floor and fell silent.                                                                                                                                |
| Signs        | Ali is sad, empathetic, and emotionally suppressed.                                                                                                                               |

#### a. Denotation

The scene on page 19 shows that Ali does not seem to react to the events around him. He sat leaning back, silent, saying little, as if indifferent to the situation.

#### b. Connotations

The connotation of the scene above is that Ali's character responds to grief calmly, with good self-control and emotional fortitude. This reflects da'wah *bil hal*, namely da'wah through exemplary attitudes and morals.

#### c. Myth

In the scene where Ali is sitting on his back, staring at the floor and saying little, it shows that silence and empathy are genuine attitudes and actions. The silent yet empathetic attitude Ali shows reflects morality in the face of disasters, teaching that

<sup>18</sup> Rachmat Kriyantono and S. Sos, *Practical Techniques of Communication Research* (Prenada Media, 2014), <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=gI9ADwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=info:uH10H2tT08sJ:scholar.google.com&ots=b0bjvsx94g&sig=Y3swMBj1HgZokg3s6gS'T-nJIakM>.

expressions of faith and concern do not always need to be verbal. This is in line with the words of Allah in *QS. Al-Baqarah verse 177* :

﴿لَيْسَ الْبِرُّ أَنْ تُولُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَآتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَاتَى السَّبِيلَ وَالسَّالِفِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَاءِ وَحِينَ الْمُلْكِ الْأُولَىٰ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ ١٧٧﴾

Meaning: "Virtue is not turning your face toward the east and west, but it is the virtue of those who believe in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Holy Book, and the prophets; giving the property he loves to relatives, orphans, the poor, travelers, beggars, and (liberating) legitimate servants; performing prayers; paying zakat; keeping promises when making promises; patience in poverty, suffering, and in times of war. They are the righteous, and they are the righteous ones."

## 2. Representation of politeness and manners to parents

The sentence in this scene describes how Ali demonstrates modesty through direct actions, despite hidden intentions or pretense. But what others see (mama) is polite behavior.

Table 3. Scene page 30

|              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Scene Quotes | "Be careful! Mama let us both go. Ali nodded perfectly. I was ready to punch his arm. He is very good at "deceiving" my mother. But Mama's smiling expression flattered how polite Ali was, making my hand movements stop." |
| Markers      | Ali nodded politely, and Mama smiled.                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Signs        | Ali looks polite                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

### a. Denotation

In this scene, Mama says carefully to Ali and Raib. Ali gives a polite nod in response, while Raib, next to him, wants to punch Ali's arm because he thinks Ali is cheating on Mama. However, Mama actually smiled because she saw Ali, who was very polite.

### b. Connotations

In this scene, Ali can create an image of piety or politeness in front of his parents. This is a good (albeit feigned) action. Ali's politeness, even if it seems pretentious, can create a positive atmosphere and prevent potential conflicts. This suggests that good behavior, no matter how small, can have a far-reaching impact.

### c. Myth

Ali's polite act in front of Raib's mother, even though Raib considered it pretentious, was a form of courtesy towards parents. This is in line with *QS. Al-Isra': 23*

﴿وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا إِمَّا يَبْلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا آفٌ وَلَا تُنْهَرُهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا ٢٣﴾

Meaning: "Your Lord has commanded that you should worship none other than Him and that you should do good to your parents. If one of them or both of them grows old in your care, then you shall not say to them the word "ah" and do not yell at them, and speak to them a kind word."

This shows that doing good to one's parents is a high form of piety in Islam. Although Ali only gave a nod, it was already a form of *outward courtesy*.

### 3. Representation of self-control and discipline in pursuing knowledge

This scene depicts Ali's actions as a form of self-control and positive self-development. This shows a wise figure who speaks little but sets an example through deeds.

Table 4. Scene page 39

|              |                                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Scene Quotes | "From that day on, Ali practically forgot all the previous talks. He chose to be busy with the silver metal tube of Av's gift, as well as learning amazing new things." |
| Markers      | Ali is busy with silver metal tubes, learning new things.                                                                                                               |
| Signs        | Ali's insolent attitude during conflict led him to focus on positive, scientific activities (learning, research, and technological exploration).                        |

#### a. Denotation

This scene shows that Ali is learning something from a gift metal tube from Av and seems to have left or forgotten previous conversations with Raib and Seli.

#### b. Connotations

In this scene, Ali shows maturity, emotional control, enthusiasm for learning, a willingness to avoid debates or conflicts, and a commitment to the value of usefulness by busying himself with learning new things.

#### c. Myth

In Islam, da'wah does not always have to be done with words. Maintaining manners, staying away from futile debates, and focusing on knowledge and self-improvement are forms of da'wah bil things as contained in *QS. Al-*

*QS. Al-Mujadilah : 11*

وَيَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوا فِي الْمَجَالِسِ فَافْسَحُوا يَفْسَحِ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَإِذَا قِيلَ انشُرُوا فَانْشُرُوا يَفْعَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ۝١

Meaning: "O you who have believed, when it is said to you, 'Give space in the assemblies', make it clear; surely Allah will give you space. When it is said, 'Stand up,' you stand up. Allah will certainly raise the believers among you and those who are given knowledge to some degree. Allah is careful about what you do."

#### 4. Representation of appreciation for sacrifice and respect for the services of others

In this scene, Ali conveys noble values through deeds, namely by giving the flying capsule he made the name ILY, which carries a moral meaning. Ali named ILY as a form of respect and a reminder of one's sacrifice. The value of respect for sacrifice, appreciation for the services of others, and inheriting the spirit of example is implied in his actions.

Table 5. Scene pages 65 - 66

|              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Scene Quotes | Ali grinned widely. "These capsules are not as fussy as the ILY. He will not tell us to hurry, shout at us to cheer up, or fiercely wake us up while we are still asleep, forbidding this or that. But above all, I decided to name it ILY because it was the name of someone who had sacrificed his life for all of us. ILY, as the name implies, will continue to accompany us on adventures." |
| Markers      | ILY is the name of the capsule Ali gave.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Signs        | A figure who has sacrificed for their group.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

a. Denotation

This scene shows Ali's character, who gives the flying capsule he made the name ILY. The name is taken from a person who sacrificed for the sake of his group. Directly, ILY is the name of a technological device (capsule).

b. Connotations

In this scene, Ali named the flying capsule ILY out of respect for someone who served. This name enshrines the value of sacrifice for the common good. Ali's action reflects an effort to pass on the spirit of struggle to the next generation.

c. Myth

Ali's act of naming ILY is a simple symbolic gesture that presents the values of sacrifice, love, and brotherhood, which align with the teachings of Islam. Honoring sacrifice is not just about honoring memorials, but about believing that the value of sacrifice endures and inspires people's struggle. This refers to *QS. Ali Imran 169* :

وَلَا تَحْسَبِ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ ﴿١٦٩﴾

Meaning: "Do not think that those who fall in the way of Allah die. Actually, they are alive and are endowed with sustenance by the sight of their Lord."

##### 5. Representation of the attitude of responsibility and honesty in the family

In this scene, Ali illustrates how to remain kind in a less-than-ideal family environment.

Table 6. Scene pages 92 - 93

|              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Scene Quotes | "Hey, you guys are completely misunderstood. That's right. My parents are super busy, so they're rarely at home. Sometimes they don't care what I'm doing, or don't know where I'm for days, but I always tell them I'm gone." Ali continued to scoop the meatballs." |
| Markers      | "I always say if I go."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Signs        | Honesty, openness, and a responsible attitude towards the family.                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

###### a. Denotation

"I always told him to go" meant that Ali always told his parents whenever he was leaving the house. Ali, who lives in a busy family and is rarely at home, often does not even know about their daily activities. Ali still shows responsible behavior by always telling his parents whenever he is going away.

###### b. Connotations

Ali's behavior reflects the noble values of honesty, respect, and responsibility toward his parents, even though the family circumstances he experiences are not ideal. Ali's attitude can be an example for his friends through real actions, not just words

###### c. Myth

Ali's actions brought to life a major narrative in Islamic culture, drawn from the Qur'an, that pious children remain filial and maintain noble morals toward their parents, regardless of family circumstances. This is in line with *QS Luqman: 14*, which emphasizes the importance of doing good to parents.

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا أُمُّهُ وَهْنًا عَلَى وَهْنٍ وَفِصَالُهُ فِي عَامَيْنِ أَنْ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ إِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٤﴾

Meaning: "We bequeath to man (to do good) to his parents. His mother had conceived him in a weakened state that was increasing, and weaned him in two years. (Our Will,) "Give thanks to your parents and to me." Only to Me (you) returns."

##### 6. Representations of emotional control, peace of mind, and mental toughness

Through his calm demeanor, exemplary emotional control, and ability to foster a positive atmosphere, Ali makes a positive impact on those around him. Without many words, he taught the values of patience, calmness, optimism, and resilience.

Table 7. Scene page 123

|              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Scene Quotes | "Seli and I looked at each other. The culprit seems to be too relaxed. Ever since entering this ancient passage, he hadn't looked tense or anxious in the slightest. Maybe this passage is just considered an ordinary hole." |
| Markers      | <i>Too relaxed, not tense, not anxious</i>                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Signs        | calmness, confidence, and courage to face uncertain situations                                                                                                                                                                |

Table 8. Scene page 126

|              |                                                                                                                |
|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Scene Quotes | I laughed, too. Ali's relaxed behavior sometimes has benefits because it can make the atmosphere more relaxed. |
| Markers      | <i>Relaxation, relaxation, and laughter together.</i>                                                          |
| Signs        | ability to regulate emotions, contagious positive energy, emotional leadership without coercion                |

Table 9. Scene page 153

|              |                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Scene Quotes | Ali bit his lip, but still looked calm. His hand gripped the lever, trying to harmonize the capsule's movement. Just two meters away from the crystal point, ILY managed to shoot up. |
| Markers      | <i>biting the lip (there is internal tension), remaining calm externally, gripping the lever, trying hard</i>                                                                         |
| Signs        | Resilience under pressure, earnestness in trying, self-control even in difficult conditions                                                                                           |

Table 10. Scene page 218

|              |                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Scene Quotes | Ali shrugged. His face has been relaxed since then, when he witnessed all the commotion. Meanwhile, Seli, next to me, was already pale. |
| Markers      | <i>shrugs, relaxed face, unaffected by the surrounding commotion</i>                                                                    |
| Signs        | Calmness, steadfastness, self-control, wisdom                                                                                           |

a. Denotation

In some of these scenes, Ali shows a relaxed attitude as he enters an ancient passageway, creating a calm atmosphere amid tension, balancing the capsule with extraordinary calm, and remaining unaffected by the commotion around him.

b. Connotations

Ali's actions reflect the values of goodness, in the form of patience, tawakal, moral example, and the ability to control lust and emotions

c. Myth

In this narrative, human beings who are patient, trustworthy, and resilient in facing trials, and who exemplify kindness to others, are a picture of those who are close to Allah and have a noble character. This is in line with the words of Allah in *QS. Ali Imran: 134* on the ability of man to overcome the trials of life through self-control.

الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكُطَيْبِ الْعَيْطِ وَالْعَافِيْنَ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٣٤﴾

Meaning: "(i.e.) those who are always insincere, both in leisure and in short, those who control their anger, and those who forgive the mistakes of others. Allah loves those who do good."

## 7. Representation of leadership attitudes and examples in guiding

*In this scene, Ali's character, who is calm and full of confidence, leads by example and guides Seli through actions, exemplifying exemplary action.*

Table 11. Scene page 233

|              |                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Scene Quotes | "Calm down, Serena," Ali whispered. He stepped confidently. "Walk behind me. Don't do anything, don't say anything; follow me." |
| Markers      | Ali's words, his calm demeanor, and his confident steps.                                                                        |
| Signs        | Moral meanings such as leadership, protection, and example                                                                      |

### a. Denotation

In this scene, Ali steps forward with confidence. He asked Seli to calm down and follow him without talking or acting alone.

### b. Connotations

This scene depicts Ali's attitude, which reflects Islamic morals in leading and calming others.

### c. Myth

This scene depicts a leader who imitates the nature of the Prophet PBUH in protecting the ummah and setting an example through morals. This refers to *QS Al-Ahzab: 21*

فَدَكَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا ﴿٢١﴾

Meaning: "Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah there is indeed a good example for you, (that is) for those who hope for Allah and the Day of Resurrection and who remember Allah a lot."

#### 8. Representation of sacrifice, courage, and loyalty to friends

Ali did not say to invite others to be brave or loyal, but rather showed it directly through his actions: being angry when a friend was threatened, changing to protect, and physically blocking danger for his friend's safety.

Table 12. Scene page 328

|              |                                                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Scene Quotes | "With his body starting to change, Ali turns into a bear when he sees his two best friends lying helpless. Ali shouted, which was more like the long roar of wild animals." |
| Markers      | The body turns into a bear, and the long roar of a wild animal.                                                                                                             |
| Signs        | Transformations due to emotional impulses (anger, sense of loss, protective instincts)                                                                                      |

Table 12. Scene page 329

|              |                                                                                          |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Scene Quotes | "The big bear is standing right between us and the robot, protecting Seli and me."       |
| Markers      | A big bear stands between them and the robot.                                            |
| Signs        | Shield/protective symbols; demonstrate courage, sacrifice, and a sense of responsibility |

##### a. Denotation

Denotatively, a big bear refers to a large, strong mammal with wild instincts.

##### b. Connotations

Connotatively, the bear in the story symbolizes the emotional and instinctive strength that arises from affection and responsibility towards friends. Ali did not turn into a bear to attack unthinkingly, but to protect his two friends who were lying helpless. The bear standing between the robot and its friends symbolizes protection and sacrifice, suggesting that true power is used to protect rather than to oppress.

##### c. Myth

This event tells us that within every human being is hidden a tremendous power that arises when he fights for others. In this narrative, Ali, as a big bear, is a

metaphor for courage born of love and loyalty. This is in line with Islamic values, as affirmed in *QS. Al-Ma'idah: 32*, that saving one life is the same as saving all mankind:

مَنْ أَجَلَ ذَلِكَ كَتَبْنَا عَلَى بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ أَنَّهُ مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا يَغْتَرِ نَفْسًا أَوْ فَسَادًا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولُنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَئِ كَثِيرًا مِّنْهُمْ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فِي الْأَرْضِ لَمُسْرِفُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

"Therefore, we have established for the Children of Israel that whoever kills someone does not kill another person, or because he has done harm to the earth, then it is as if he had killed all mankind. On the other hand, whoever preserves the life of one human being, as if he has preserved the life of all human beings. Indeed, our Messengers have come to them with clear revelations. Then, indeed, many of them afterward transgressed the limits of the earth."

#### 9. Representation: Istiqomah and sincerity in doing good, even though it is underestimated

In this scene, Ali shows that even though others laugh at him, don't believe him, and even see him as a troublemaker, he remains consistent in doing good and useful things. He does not respond with harsh words or verbal defense, but proves his ability through tangible deeds.

Table 13. Scene page 369

|              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Scene Quotes | "I don't know either, Raib," Ali finally replied more seriously. "I'm just happy to do. So, even if you laugh at me and don't believe me, for example, I still do it. Even though one school thought I was the culprit and the teachers didn't like me, I knew exactly that I could do a lot of things that no one else could." I was silent in my cube. Ali was right. He keeps trying." |
| Markers      | "I did it anyway."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Signs        | Perseverance and consistency in doing good or doing positive things, even though they do not receive support and are even underestimated.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

##### a. Denotation

In this scene, Ali tells Raib that the key to his courage and achievement is to keep believing in himself and keep doing things, even when he is laughed at or seen as negative by others.

##### b. Connotations

This reflects that Ali is a persistent, sincere person with an unyielding spirit. He is also consistently good, even though his environment is not supportive.

c. Myth

In the context of Islam, this reflects the attitude of *istiqamah* and sincerity of intention (*ikhlas*), which are highly upheld in Islamic values. People who continue to do good in solitude have a big soul and high morals. This is in line with *QS. Fussilat: 30* :

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا تَتَنَزَّلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَلَّا تَخَافُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَبْشِرُوا بِالْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي كُنتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

"Indeed, those who say, 'Our Lord is Allah,' and then remain (in their stand), the angels will descend upon them (saying), 'Do not be afraid and grieved, and rejoice in the paradise that has been promised to you.'"

This verse affirms that the one who remains steadfast in the path of truth (*istiqamah*) will gain glory. Ali, as a character, continues to do good despite social pressure, sets an example in *da'wah bil hal*, and reflects the value of *istiqamah* in Islam.

Ali's character in the novel *Matabari* by Tere Liye strongly represents the value of *da'wah bil hal* through actions, attitudes, and decisions taken throughout the story. From a total of 390 pages, the researcher analyzed 13 main scenes that contained *da'wah* representations in the form of exemplary attitudes, patience, care, responsibility, and sacrifice. This analysis is carried out using Roland Barthes' semiotic method, which reveals meaning at three levels: denotation, connotation, and myth. Barthes' approach becomes relevant because every action of a character in a popular novel carries more than a literal meaning and conveys a multi-layered, implicit ideological message.

On a denotative level, Ali's silence and indifference upon returning from the Sun clan, which led to the loss of one of his friends in battle, seemed indifferent. However, if examined more deeply, these actions actually show empathy and concern that are not expressed verbally. This connotation implies that Ali's silence is a subtle expression of concern. In one of the scenes of the story, Ali comes to Raib's house to pick him up from school while trying on his new flying capsule. At that time, Ali showed a polite attitude to Mrs. Raib, even though she looked a bit contrived and stiff. However, if examined connotatively, this attitude reflects the value of politeness that cannot be ignored. Simple actions such as greeting with respect and keeping a word to his best friend's parents show that Ali, despite being known as an eccentric and experimental child, still upholds moral values in social interactions. This shows that *da'wah* can

be carried out through small actions, and that these are of great value. According to Roland Barthes, connotations arise from cultural associations with the signs used, so that their meaning is subjective but still carries social influence.

Furthermore, when Ali named his capsule "ILY" as a form of respect for someone who has sacrificed, these acts contain symbols of love, loyalty, and appreciation for sacrifice, which are an important part of Islamic values. In Barthes' framework, this is a process of myth formation, that is, when signs not only have literal and symbolic meanings, but also create an ideological narrative that is considered natural. When Ali is described as a calm and wise leader, this reflects the example of the Prophet PBUH in leading the ummah. This is a mythical form of Islamic leadership, attached to fictional characters through narrative construction.

When Ali turns into a big bear to protect his best friend, it is a semiotic visual metaphor connoting courage, love, and loyalty. This symbol reinforces the mythological meaning that defending the weak is a noble act in Islamic teachings. Lastly, even though Ali was labeled as a student with a negative reputation, he remained consistent in doing good. This consistency shows the value of *istiqamah* in da'wah, which does not depend on social recognition but on the sincerity of intentions and deeds. Barthes noted that myth functions as an ideological system that disguises reality, so that simple actions seem natural yet contain moral and religious messages.

Thus, *the novel Matahari* is proof that popular literary works can serve as an effective medium of da'wah, especially when analyzed in depth using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. Ali's character became a representative medium of da'wah *bil hal*, conveyed not only verbally but also through behavior, decisions, and examples in daily life. Every action of Ali becomes a "sign" that gives birth to a layered meaning from denotatives that appear on the surface, connotatives that reflect values, to myths that represent naturalized Islamic ideology. This analysis supports the findings of various studies that da'wah in popular culture is effective at implicitly and persuasively shaping awareness of Islamic values.

## CONCLUSION

All of these findings prove that novels can be used as an effective da'wah medium as well as a meaningful literacy effort. Ali, as a teenage character with intelligence, courage, and morals, is a clear example of how Islamic messages can be communicated creatively and touchingly through

literature by packaging them within an engaging storyline. Novels not only provide entertainment, but also have great potential as a da'wah medium.

The character Ali in this novel embodies da'wah through empathy, patience, responsibility, courage, and a spirit of protecting others. These attitudes are clearly depicted in various scenes, showing that da'wah need not be conveyed verbally but can also be conveyed through morals and daily behavior. Fictional literary works can also be an effective medium to increase reading interest and address the problem of low literacy in Indonesia by presenting novels that are not only entertaining but also provide moral examples.

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